

Amendments to the Specification

Please replace paragraph [0062] with the following marked-up replacement paragraph:

-- The auto-expiration values may be checked, for each unexpired user and group, by scheduling an evaluation action or event with a task scheduler, such that the evaluation will occur on a certain date. When the scheduled evaluation event is performed, any entries meeting their auto-expiration criteria will then be marked as expired. As another alternative, instead of scheduling an auto-expiration evaluation event, the checking of auto-expiration values may be performed periodically, e.g., at some configurable interval (such as monthly) or upon occurrence of some event (where the user may be allowed to specify the triggering event or events). (Another alternative that uses a task scheduler for scheduling auto-expiration events for IM users directly, rather than scheduling evaluation events, is described below prior to the discussion of Fig. 5.) The checking that is performed when messages are sent and received is described below, prior to the discussion of Fig. 5, and is not limited to unexpired users and groups. Fig. 6, described below, provides logic that may be used to implement the auto-expiration evaluation (i.e., checking for expiration), and Figs. 7 and 8 provide logic that may be used to implement expiration processing for outbound and inbound messages, respectively. The manner in which the checking process is carried out depends on whether a “sliding date” approach as described above with reference to a relative time period or a fixed date (including an absolute date specified in the manner described with reference to element 212 of Fig. 2 or a relative date implemented using the “alternative approach” described above with reference to element 211 of Fig. 2, where an auto-expiration date is statically ~~computing~~ computed as a fixed offset from the current date) is specified for the auto-expiration values. When a sliding date approach is used, the checking

performed for each unexpired user preferably comprises first adding the outbound auto-expiration value (column 430) to the date an outbound IM message was last sent (column 420) to this user, and comparing the result to the current date. Next, a comparison is made by adding the inbound auto-expiration value (column 450) to the date an inbound IM message was last received (column 440) from this user and comparing the result to the current date. Similarly, when a fixed date is used, the outbound auto-expiration value (column 430) is compared to the date an outbound IM message was last sent to this user (column 420) and the inbound auto-expiration date (column 450) is compared to the date an inbound IM message was last received from this user (column 440). --